The Persian Mystics

The Invocations of Sheikh 'Abdullāh Ansāri of Herat, A.D. 1005–1090

By Sardar Sir Jogendra Singh

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EDITORIAL NOTE

THE object of the editors of this series is a very definite one. They desire above all things that in their humble way, these books shall be the ambassadors of good-will and understanding between East and West, the old world of Thought, and the new of Action. They are confident that a deeper knowledge of the great ideals and lofty philosophy of Oriental thought may help to a revival of that true spirit of Charity which neither despises nor fears the nations of another creed and colour.

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Foreword

SIR JOGENDRA SINGH is to be congratulated on having given us his rendering into English of the Sayings of the Mystic 'Abdullāh Ansāri. Islam has given the world mystics no less than Hinduism or Christianity. In these days when irreligion masquerades as religion, it is well to remind ourselves of what the best mind of all the religions of the world has thought and said. We must not, like the frog in the well, who imagines that the universe ends with the wall surrounding his well, think that our religion alone represents the whole Truth and all the others are false. A reverent study of the other religions of the world would show that they are equally true as our own, though all are necessarily imperfect.

M. K. GANDHI.

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The Persian Mystics: Ansāri

Introduction

My friend Raja Sir Daljeet Singh handed over to me one day the sayings, in Persian, of 'Abdullāh Ansāri. He had discovered and treasured them, and now he offered to share his treasure with me. It was a real gift, for which I am deeply grateful.

I feel that these sayings contain true advice to guide the Pilgrim along the path of discipleship to the Temple of Peace. They come from the heart of a man who himself had trodden the path and found what his heart desired.

'Abdullāh Ansāri had seen and experienced what is hidden from other eyes. His discovery proved that Truth is unchanging and that those who find it, in all ages and in all times, speak with unchallenged unanimity. They do not argue, but affirm, that anyone who is in earnest can lift the veil and resolve for himself the mysteries of life. 'Abdullāh Ansāri does not expound or explain, he simply states facts. His facts however are not within the cognition of those whose consciousness has not been freed from the clouding of the senses.

It is held that when a Seeker gives his heart and mind to the search, and disperses the mists that arise from tumultuous passions, Truth becomes brighter and brighter and fills the Soul with its light.

It is asserted that while reason is puzzling itself about mystery of consciousness, time, and space, the man of Faith is going forward from discovery to discovery, in the growing illumination of his heart.

But it must be recognised that this knowledge is only available to those whose eyes are fixed, like an archer, on the arrow and the object at which he aims, and that without purity of purpose and unceasing effort deliverance cannot be obtained.

In all ages and in all times men have sought and found truth. They have shown the way and means of attainment. But men have listened to the message with incredulity and continued the mad pursuit of sense objects.

Passions of body and mind govern men and kindle fires of desire, of greed, attachment, egoism and anger. These enslave and obscure the mind which must be freed, and restored to its pristine purity to reflect truth. The seekers of truth, therefore, concentrate all their strength in drawing away the mind from sense objects and to set it free from the dominations of fear and hate. Some follow the path of knowledge, and others the path

of devotion, hoping to lose all sense of duality in the supreme uprising of love.

The world-forsakers are something of an enigma to world-seekers. The truth is that a Yogi or a Sufi gives up that which has no real value. He says that the bewildering fascination of the world is like the thirst of a deer in a desert, which drives it to follow shadows of a mirage, phantoms of water and trees and mocking cities that vanish when approached. According to him :

> " What is its joy, what is its woe
> But scented ash, that used to glow ?
> A sandal wood of long ago.
> A camphor of the past."

These God-filled men carry an aroma of sweetness and peace ; of radiant joy and absolute serenity, in a restless world, having drunk from the source of life itself. The Ego no more drives them.

Mystics declare life to be a journey over an unknown path which is as straight and narrow as a razor. There is no other light but that of faith to guide the seeker, no sustenance but devotion. The track ahead cannot be seen. Going is uncertain, and pitfalls await the unwary. The seeker must travel in the dark. He must not cry for a candle to grope in the gloom or seek the

rush-light of reason. He must go steadily forward, in the hope of reaching a great illumination, which awaits him at the journey's end.

There is no religion which has been without its mystics, men who, by their devotion, have unravelled the mystery of life and found God. They have spoken with no uncertain voice of the Truth that has been revealed to them.

It would profit little to dwell on the system of Sufism. Volumes have been written in Persian and other languages on the subject. It is not a system really. It is a way of life. It is beyond the range of reason. It cannot be comprehended, but it can be realised.

I would rather let Ansāri speak, than overload what he has so simply and directly said with comments of my own, from the shadows of a mind that lacks crystal clearness. I am confident that those who are on the mystic path of discovery will find in his sayings food for the soul.

A great mystic has said :

> " To know the world, is to despise it,
> To know God, is to be lost in His love."

It seems that in all ages and in all times there come true teachers, who bear witness to the truths of religion,

who speak of what they know, and are ready to share their knowledge with those who are prepared to follow the path of discipleship. The learned and the wise, the priesthood of all creeds, cannot reconcile itself to the direct methods of attainment of the mystics. The learned call these knowers *mystics*, because they cannot bring within the ambit of intellect what is beyond the bounds of intellect; the worldly wise in pursuit of their ambitions suspect their sanity, for they discard what they value most, according to them they preach the giving up of substances for a shadow. The priesthood with whom adherence to fixed ritual replaces the spirit of religion are afraid of their influence, and therefore, these devotees of God, sane, in an insane world, are only understood by those who are ready to follow truth.

The mystics pass like shooting stars, giving light to those who are ready to receive it, and disturbing others, who close their eyes, lest they may be dazzled by its brilliance. Generally the crowd drives them to the cross and the gallows, but 'Abdūllah Ansāri seems to have escaped both. Evidently he did not violate rules of rigid orthodoxy and led a life of sweetness, without compromising the truth, that was his, and which is enshrined in his teachings.

Life, for rich and poor alike, is full of joys and sorrows,

as long as the ego drives and seeks satisfaction in things outside itself. It is a life of ambition, or pleasures of senses, or rivalries, or quest for power, for money, which even when gathered remains sterilised. For he who hoards money, deprives himself of its service. It is only when sickness of the soul grows and fatal fascination of the world fades, that true desire takes birth in the heart and the awakened self seeks the path of salvation.

It is said that an ancestor of 'Abdullāh Ansāri was in the Court of the prophet of Islam, in charge of his horses; and later came to Herat with Asaf son of Kais. His father, Abu Mansur Mohemed Ansāri, became a permanent resident of Herat.

'Abdullāh Ansāri was born on Friday at sunset in 396 Hijri or A.D. 1005. At the age of nine he displayed a remarkable mastery, and seemed to know all that was known on religion and philosophy; at the age of fourteen he sat in the company of the learned and discoursed wisely on all the subjects that were under discussion. Very wonderful are the powers that a soul brings with it, its garnered harvest of aeons of experience. 'Abdullāh Ansāri was born with knowledge. He had not to seek and discover it anew. He was an octogenarian when he departed from this earth. It is said

that he had about a hundred thousand Persian verses by heart, and himself composed 6,000 verses in Arabic. There are four books in Persian which are still studied with reverence. These are *Risala Munajat*—The Book of Prayer, *Tabqat-ul-Sufia*—The Book of Sufees, *Zad-ul-Arfin*—The Book of Saints, *Kitab-i-Israr*—The Book of Mysteries.

He gathered round him a band of devoted disciples, and this society came to be known as Silsila-i-Ansāri, and is said to have survived up to the present time.

The following verses describe his soul's journey from material manifestation to spiritual absorption—

" From the unmanifest I came,
And pitched my tent
In the Forest of Material existence.
I passed through
Mineral and vegetable kingdoms,
Then my mental equipment
Carried me into the animal kingdom;
Having reached there I crossed beyond it;
Then in the crystal clear shell of human heart
I nursed the drop of self into a Pearl,
And in association with good men
Wandered round the Prayer House,
And having experienced that, crossed beyond it;

Then I took the road that leads to Him,
And became a slave at His gate;
Then the duality disappeared
And I became absorbed in Him."

JOGENDRA SINGH.

AIRA HOLME,
SIMLA, E.
11*th September*, 1938.

The Invocations of 'Abdullāh Ansāri

In the name of God,
Most Gracious,
Most Merciful.

O Thou Munificent One
Who art the bestower
Of all bounties,
O Thou wise One
Who overlookest our faults,

O Self-existent One
Who art beyond our comprehension,
O Thou omnipotent One
Who hast no equal in power and greatness,
Who art without a second :
O Thou merciful One
Who guidest stray souls to the right path,
Thou art truly our God.

Give purity to our minds,
Aspiration to our hearts,
Light to our eyes.
Out of Thy grace and bounty
Give us that which Thou deemest best.

O Lord, Out of Thy grace give faith and light to our hearts.
And with the medicine of truth and steadfastness cure the ills of our life.

I know not what to ask of Thee,
Thou art the Knower.
Give that which Thou deemest best.

O Lord ! I have wasted my life,
Injured my soul,
And pleased the accursèd Satan.
My being or not being is of little worth.
Accept my repentance and forgive my sins,
Take me from sorrow to happiness.

From the consequence of my past actions
And perils of the future
I see no way of escape.
O Lord ! I am afraid of the evil within me.

Teach me how to save myself
from the snares of self;
Take me by the hand,
For without Thy mercy I have no refuge.

O God, may my brain reel with thoughts of Thee,
May my heart thrill with the mysteries of Thy grace,
May my tongue move only to utter
Thy praise.

I live only to do Thy will,
My lips move only in praise of Thee,
O Lord, whoever becometh aware of Thee
Casteth out all else other than Thee.

He who becometh aware of Thee
What use hath he for life,
For children, family or earthly things?

Whom Thou intoxicatest with Thy love
On him bestoweth Thou both the worlds.
But Thy mad devotee,
What use hath he for both the worlds?

O Lord, give me a heart
That I may pour it out in thanksgiving.
Give me life
That I may spend it
in working for the salvation of the world.

O Lord, give me that right discrimination
That the Lure of the world may cheat me no more.
Give me strength
That my faith suffer no eclipse.

O Lord, give me understanding,
That I stray not from the path.
Give me light
To avoid pitfalls.

O Lord, keep watch over me
That I stray not.
Keep me on the path of righteousness
That I escape from the pangs of repentance.

O Lord, judge me not by my actions,
Of Thy mercy, save me,
And make my humble efforts fruitful.

O Lord, give me a heart
Free from the flames of desire.
Give me a mind
Free from the waves of dissimulation.

O Lord, give me eyes
Which see nothing but Thy glory.
Give me a mind
That finds delight in Thy service.
Give me a soul
Drunk in the wine of Thy wisdom.

O Lord, to find Thee is my desire
But to comprehend Thee
Is beyond my strength.
Remembering Thee is solace
to my sorrowing heart,
Thoughts of Thee are my Constant Companions
I call upon Thee night and day.
The flame of Thy love glows
In the darkness of my night.

O Lord, he whom Thou killest doth not smell of blood,
And he whom Thou burnest doth not smell of smoke,

For he whom Thou burnest is happy in
The burning,
And he whom Thou killest, rejoiceth
In being killed.

O Lord, though the blue flower be poisonous
It is of Thy garden,
And if 'Abdullāh be a sinner
He is of Thy people.

O Lord, when I think of Thy compassion
I feel like a crowned king;
When I think of my sins
I am as dust, nay, less than dust.

Life in my body pulsates only for Thee,
My heart beats in resignation to Thy will.
If on my dust a tuft of grass were
To grow
Every blade would tremble with my devotion
For Thee.

MY DESIRE

O Lord, every one desires to behold
Thee,
I desire
That Thou mayest cast a glance at me.

Let me not disgrace myself.
If Thy forgiveness awaits me in the end
Lower not the standard of forgiveness
Which Thou hast unfurled.

O Lord, if Thou sendest me to Hell
I raise no protest.
And if Thou takest me to Paradise,
I go there, but not of my own choice.

If in Hell I obtain union with Thee
What care I for those who dwell in Paradise?
And were I called to Heaven without Thee
The pleasures of Paradise would then
Be worse than the fires of Hell.

O Lord, prayer at Thy gate
Is a mere formality:
Thou knowest what Thy slave desires.

O Lord, better for me to be dust,
And my name effaced
From the records of the world,
Than that Thou forget me.

He knoweth all our good and evil
Nothing is hidden from Him.
He knoweth what is best medicine
To cure the pain,
And to rescue the fallen.
Be humble, for He exalteth the humble.

I am intoxicated with love of Thee
And need no fermented wine.
I am Thy bird
Free from need of seed
And safe from the snare of the fowler.
In the Kaba and in the Temple
Thou art the object of my search.
Else I am freed
From both these places of worship.

O Lord, when the fire of separation was burning me
Why didst Thou light the fire of Hell?

Lord, when Thou wert hidden from me
The fever of life possessed me.
When Thou revealest Thyself
This fever of life departeth.

O Lord, other men are afraid of Thee
But I—I am afraid of myself,
From Thee flows good alone,
From me flows evil.

Each day I recall the day,
That is left behind.
Sorrowing over my misdeeds
The dread of my doings drives me to despair.
The thought of Thy mercy
Is the only solace of my heart.

Others fear what the morrow
May bring.
I am afraid of what happened yesterday.

O Lord, if Thou holdest me responsible for
My sins
I shall cling to Thee for Thy Grace.

I with my sin, am an insignificant atom.
Thy Grace is resplendent as the Sun.

O Lord, out of regard for Thy name,
The qualities which are Thine,
Out of regard for Thy greatness,
Listen to my cry
For Thou alone canst redeem me.

O Lord, intoxicate me with the wine
Of Thy love.
Place the chains of Thy slavery on
My feet ;
Make me empty of all but Thy love,
And in it destroy me and bring me
Back to life.
The hunger Thou has awakened, culminates
In fulfilment.

Make my body impervious to the fires
Of Hell ;
Vouchsafe to me a vision of Thee in Heaven.
The spark Thou hast kindled make it
Everlasting.

I think of no other,
And in Thy love care for none else.
None has a place in my heart but Thee.
My heart has become Thy abode,
It has no place for another.

O Lord, Thou cherishest the helpless
And I am helpless,
Apply Thy balm to my bleeding heart
For Thou art the physician.

O Lord, I, a beggar, ask of Thee
More than what a thousand kings may ask of Thee;
Each one has something he needs to ask of Thee,
I have come to ask Thee to give me Thyself.

If words can establish a claim
I claim a crown.
But if deeds are wanted, I am as helpless as
The ant.

Urged by desire I wandered in the streets
Of good and evil,
I gained nothing except feeding the fire of desire.

As long as in me remains the breath of life
Help me, for Thou alone canst hear my prayer.

My friend, wisdom lies
In abandoning heedlessness,
In turning the heart away from the worldly objects,
And in gathering provision for the hereafter
Before departure from this earth.

Someone asked the Holy Prophet—
"What dost thou say concerning the things of the world?"
The Prophet said—"What can I say about them:
Things which are acquired with hard labour,
Preserved with perpetual watchfulness,
And left with regret."

My friend, the world is not a place
For enjoyment,
But a place where humanity is on trial.
The world is a mere crossing
And not an abiding city of delight.

O mendicant, man is doomed to death
And has to leave the world.

Dost thou take the world for a friend
Or foe?
If thou holdest it a friend,
Know that it will not last.
If thou holdest it to be a foe, consume it,
So that it may not last.

Behold what thou art, and whence thou
Hast come.
Beware what thou doest and whither
Thou wouldest go,
If thou treadest the path of lust and longing
Thou shalt go without fruit and without good name.

My friend, put not thy reliance
On three things:
On heart, on time and on life.
The heart is easily tempted,
Time is always in a state of flux,
The sands of life run out.

My friend, make an effort,
That thou mayest become a man,
And gather treasures
Of feeling for others,
So that with the favour of saints
And by the blessings of waiting on them
Thy cheeks may grow pale,
And love of the world grow
Cold in thy heart.

If thou wishest to become a man
In the world,
In the path of religion
Learn to feel for others,
Night and day attend on holy men.
When thou hast become like dust
Of their feet
Thou shalt become a man.

O man, remember death at all times ;
Renounce all discord and tyranny ;
Deem what has not been done as done,
And what has been done as not done.

Watch vigilantly the state of
Thine own mind.
Love of God begins in
Harmlessness.

Know that the Prophet built an external Kaba
Of clay and water,
And an inner Kaba in life and heart.
The outer Kaba was built by Abraham,
The Holy ;
The inner is sanctified by the glory of
God Himself.

On the path of God
Two places of worship mark the stages.
The material temple,
And the temple of the heart.
Make your best endeavour
To worship at the temple of the heart.

O mendicant, paradise is only an
Allurement ;
The real objective is
the house of God Himself.

Fasting only means the saving of bread,
Formal prayer is the business
Of old men and women,
Pilgrimage is a pleasure of the world.
Conquer the heart,
Its subjection is conquest indeed.

If thou canst walk on water
Thou art no better than a straw.
If thou canst fly in air
Thou art no better than a fly.
Conquer thy heart
That thou mayest become somebody.

One man spends seventy years in learning
And fails to kindle the light.
Another, all his life learns nothing
But hears one word
And is consumed by that word.

On this path argument is of no avail;
Seek, and thou mayest find the truth.

Helpless in childhood,
Intoxicated in youth,

And decrepit in old age ;
Then, O helpless one, when couldst thou
Worship God ?

Alas ! alas, for the master-craftsman's ways :
From the same iron he forges a horse-shoe
As well as a mirror for the Emperor.

My friend, see thine own faults ;
The faults of others,
For thee they are not.
Make thy heart forgiving ;
Nor sell thy soul for the fruits of the world.

It is wrong to consider oneself above all others
And to exalt one's self.
Learn from the pupil of thine eye
To see others, but to thyself be blind.

Know friend,
Human sorrow springs from three things :
To want before it is due,
To want more than the destined share,
To want for oneself
What belongs to others.

When Providence has provided thy share
Separately from others
Then why art thou jealous,
And hungering for that which is not for thee?

Desire for knowledge is the path
Of honour;
Desire for wealth, that of dishonour.

Wealth is the chain which slaves wear
Knowledge the kingly crown.

The path is narrow and beset by
Yawning chasms.
Woe to him who is heavily laden with sin
And walks without the light of faith.

He with whom virtue has become a habit,
Hath accomplished his work here,
and hereafter.

The law of life requires:

1. Sincerity to God.
2. Severity to self.
3. Justice to all people.
4. Service to elders.

5. Kindness to the young.
6. Generosity to the poor.
7. Good counsel to friends.
8. Forbearance with enemies.
9. Indifference to fools.
10. Respect to the learned.

Know that four things are symbols of
Ill luck :
Ingratitude in good fortune,
Impatience in ill fortune,
Discontent with what fate ordains,
Hesitation in serving fellow-men.

In this path, be a man
With a heart full of compassion.
Engage not in vain doing,
Make not thy home in the street of lust and desire.

If thou wouldst become a pilgrim on the path
Of love
The first condition is
That thou become as humble as dust
And ashes.

Remove "A" from "Murad" (desire) it becomes
Murd (man);
He who renounceth desire becometh a man.

Know that he who desires the things of the
World
Is haunted by sorrow.
He who desires Heaven
Is a labourer working for wages.
But, he who desires God,
Is on the path of glory.

O thou who covetest the world
How long wilt thou follow the path of sorrow?
Even if thou seekest the pleasures of Heaven
Thy quest is on the wrong trail.
But if thou seekest God and receivest His seal,
Thou art victorious in both the worlds.

Know, that when thou learnest to lose thy self
Thou wilt reach the Beloved.
There is no other secret to be revealed,
And more than this is not known to me.

Be humble and cultivate silence.
If thou hast received, rejoice,
And fill thyself with ecstasy
And if not, continue the demand.

Be a rose and not a thorn !
Be a friend and not an enemy !

To exalt the Beloved is to practise religion ;
To exalt the self is to practise paganism.

If the seeker is worthy
Attainment is easy.

The company of a good friend
is the light of the soul.
The company of an ungodly person
Is the poison of life.
A snake is preferable to a faithless friend.

Were I to abide in fire a hundred
Years
That scorching flame would be easier to bear
Than the company of Godless men ;
Death is preferable to such company.

What is worship ?
To realise reality.
What is the sacred law ?
To do no evil.
What is reality ?
Selflessness.

The heart enquired of the soul
What is the beginning of this business ?
What its end, and what its fruit ?
The soul answered :
The beginning of it is
the annihilation of self,
Its end faithfulness,
And its fruit immortality.

The heart asked what is annihilation ?
What is faithfulness ?
What is immortality ?

The soul answered :
Freedom from self is annihilation ;
Faithfulness is
Fulfilment of love ;
Immortality is union of immortal
With mortal.

O Devotee, if thou lovest God truly
Why dost thou cast longing eyes
On things other than Him ?

In this path the eye must cease to see,
And the ear to hear.
Save unto Him, and about Him.
Be as dust on His path,
Even the kings of this earth
Make the dust of His feet
The balm of their eyes.

The Knower and the Known

He who knoweth
This body is of the earth
Gets rid of pride.

He who knoweth
God's law prevails
Is freed from sorrow.

He who knoweth
Each event is preordained
Plans no more.

He who knoweth
All that happens is from Him
Is freed from tribulation.

* *

If thou lovest this world,
It will fail thee.
If thou lovest God,
He will set thee free.

Work without fortitude
Undermines the roots of life.
Self-indulgent enjoyment
Only the worldly relish.

Be not courageous in sinning,
God metes out utter justice.
Fill not thyself with pride,
It is not pleasing to God.

Wert thou to know
The Creator,
The world could no more
Hold thee in thrall.

Suffering without resignation
Is like a burn without the balm.

Faith
That lacks reality
Is akin to faithlessness.

Blind obedience
Without the light of knowledge
Is utter waste of effort,
Like ploughing the sand.

If thou art freed
From the cage of this world
Soar into the Empyrean
And share the bliss of God.

Do not, O God, put out
This flickering lamp !
Cast not this heart afire with love for Thee
Into the furnace of desire !

Oh ! God ! Rend not
My patched-up sail,
Nor drive my broken bark
From the river of knowledge !

Eyes that see an enemy
Are many thousands,
But the eye that sees a friend
Is one in a thousand.

Even a prison
Radiates happiness
If love for Thee
Fills the heart.

Blessed is enslavement
Which compels Thy service,
Thy bondsmen are happy
In their bondage.

There are two Kabas :
The Kaba built on earth,
And the Kaba of the heart.

The first is the one that the feet
Of pilgrims frequent ;
The other is the secret place
Which Seekers of Truth discover.

It is the former
Which fills the eyes of the faithful;
The other only the devotee finds
Under the eye of God Himself.

The pilgrimage to the earthly Kaba
Is a matter of formal discipline;
The finding of the Kaba of the heart
Depends on the grace of God.

At the one the pilgrims drink from the well of Zam-Zam;
The other unlocks its springs
To the welling up of sighs.

The earthly Kaba
Is guarded by the mountain of 'Irfat,
The temple of the heart
Is radiant with God's own light.

From the earthly Kaba
Stone idols were removed;
From the Kaba of the heart
Greed and desire are dethroned.

In this path
Anguished hearts bleed,
Like Jacob separated from his son,
Like Majnun separated from his Laila.

If thou art a wanderer
From door to door
Close thine eyes
To the faults of others.

If thou doest
Some good deed
Let it not be known :
Better far, thy faults were revealed.

Oh ! Friend ! Keep away
From the ways of oppression ;
To tyrannise His creation
Is to forget the Creator.

If thou desirest happiness
Choke then the springs of sorrow.
If thou wishest to attain thine object,
Labour for it without cease.

Renounce desire ;
Overcome evil,
And rejoice not
In the misfortune of others.

By harsh words,
By ridicule or laughter,
Do not injure the feelings of others,
Refrain from indulgence in both.

Treat others
As thou wouldst be treated.
What thou likest not for thyself
Dispense not to others.

O ! Man of firm Faith
Do good and earn the reward.
Let not ingratitude
Enter thy heart.

If thou art a wanderer
In search of Truth
Betray not thy secret
To the outer world.

Why remain a bondsman
Of greed, or mere speculator
On the mysteries of life.
Devotion alone can fulfil thy need.

Be not proud of wealth
'Tis but temporarily lent.
Treasure, more than aught else,
The gift of health.

O God ! Fill me with Thy Grace
So that the passions of the body
Assail my mind no more !

Help me, O God !
For none else can
Bestow Thy gifts ;
Thou art the only Giver.

I am aware
Of my own unworthiness,
But I am certain
Of Thy boundless grace.

* * *

Regard not thyself
With thine own eye
Lest it may bring misfortune
By magnifying the self.

The evil eye of another
Can be averted,
There is no escape
From the evil of one's own.

Satan saw himself
With his own eye, created out of fire.
He looked down on Adam
Created out of earth.

Satan who looked at himself,
With his own eye, was condemned for ever.
Adam, on whom he cast an evil eye,
Craved forgiveness and was redeemed.

'Tis better to be
Humble as the earth
Rather than steeped
In overweening self-conceit.

When Mansur was imprisoned
For proclaiming oneness with God,
His friend Shibli asked him
" What is this love ? "

" Come to-morrow
For answer," he said.
Shibli obeyed and found Mansur
Facing the gallows.

Mansur looked at him
And said, " Read the answer :
Love begins in absorbing the ' I '
And ends thus " :

" Its noose tightens
To squeeze out the self
Then comes the test of the Cross.
Stay if thou apprehendest the secret, otherwise go.'

Men are like addicts of drink,
Unaware of their own state.
The wise are wide-awake,
Having cast out the spell.

Wealthy men are narrow-hearted,
Others, discontented for all time,
Lament their misfortunes
Real and imagined.

The emancipated are freed
From bonds of being, and non-being :
They have broken the cage
And found their freedom.

They have emptied
The cup of desire ;
They strive no more
For worldly greatness.

Freed from joy and sorrow
They have found their true self ;
They dwell for ever more
In the wondrous realm of God.

If a lame dog
Finds admission at Thy gate,
And the weary are refreshed by Thy sight
No reason have I for despair.

Words of Warning

O ! THOU wanderer in the wilderness of the world
See the graveyards that lie about thee.
Realise the truth, that life passes,
And be not heedless, as drunkards are.

Under tomb-stones and in mausoleums sleep
Thousands that blossomed like the rose,
And wasted precious days
In mad pursuit of pleasure.

They too were unwearying
Planning for Profit and Pastime,
And attainment of perpetual enjoyment,
Completely forgetful of the future.

They too ardently desired
Greatness and Jewelled Diadems ;
They feasted on dainty dishes
And drank from goblets of silver and of gold.

They nursed in the soil of their hearts
The seed of Earthly pleasures,
Gathering in their Earthly homes
All the treasures of the Earth.

Suddenly they were called upon
To drink from the hands of Azrael [1]
Sherbet of mortality, and enter
The gate of Death.

They were like bankrupt Bankers
Leaving their treasures behind
Gathered from the fields of sufferings
Their only gain—a sorrowing soul.

Friends, remember always
That all that lives must die ;
Therefore prepare for the future,
Otherwise, Hell is your assured portion.

O, ye heedless young men !
O, ye ignorant old men, who have learnt nothing !
Are ye mad not to realise
The truth of life ?

[1] Azrael, the Angel of Death.

In days of old,
Before your time,
I too like you, strode the carpeted earth
As if it was mine for ever.

I too slept on soft beds,
And stepped on rugs of velvet ;
I too held gorgeous banquets,
And indulged in pleasure

Before I became aware of the peril ;
The ruin that awaited me,
The loss of love and affection,
The waste of gold and wealth.

The cup of life was empty ;
I was marched out
Bringing nothing from the world,
Not even love and loyalty of friends.

My acts and deeds and weary work
Gathered for me no grace ;
From friends and family came no help ;
My hoarded wealth afforded no relief.

Now I am overwhelmed with shame
How to face the day of Judgment.
Friendless and forlorn
I carry nothing with me.

No visitors throng the portals of the grave ;
No callers come for a pleasant talk ;
No sound disturbs the silence ;
My body is turning into a handful of dust.

Pleasures of the world
Are things of the past ;
My flesh and skin
Are an offering to the worms.

When the opportunity was mine
I had no discrimination
To seek reality from the unreal.
I was wrapped in forgetfulness—even as you.

Here I lie under Earth
My teeth are all scattered ;
Earth is eating into my limbs,
Taking them back to herself.

My home is in ruins;
The fruits of my labour are swallowed up.
My children find no place in my house;
Another sleeps on my bed.

I now shed tears of repentance,
And lament over my misdeeds.
Take warning from me
And work while there is still time.

The bird of the soul will take wing
And leave the body untenanted.
Grass will grow over the grave,
And perchance a flower unfold.

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